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S P E E C H

OF

HON. A. H. COFFROTH, OF PENNA.,

DELIVERED

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, JUNE 14, 1864.

The House having under consideration the joint resolution to amend the Constitution of the United States to abolish slavery—

Mr. COFFROTH said :

Mr. SPEAKER: When I entered this Hall at the opening of this session, I had determined not to participate in any general debate. It was my intention to be a listener and not a talker. This resolve would have been faithfully kept, had it not been for the extraordinary legislation that has been pressed upon the House—legislation, in my opinion, which is not only subversive of the interests of the people, but which erects an insurmountable barrier to the restoration of the Union. The resolution before us proposes to amend the Constitution, made by the patriots of the Revolution, so as to abolish slavery throughout the United States. It proposes to set free four million of ignorant and debased negroes to swarm the country with pestilential effect. It is to carry out the design of the bad and wicked men, whose fanatical teaching has produced the terrible bloodshed and destruction of life through which we are now passing.

Sir, we should pause before proceeding any farther in this unconstitutional and censurable legislation. The mere abolition of slavery is not my cause of complaint. I care not whether slavery is retained or abolished by the people of the States in which it exists—the only rightful authority. The question to me is, has Congress a right to take from the people of the South their property—or, in other words, having no pecuniary interest therein, are we justified in freeing the slave property of others? Can we abolish slavery in the loyal State of Kentucky against her will? If this resolution should pass, and be ratified by three-fourths of the States—States already free—and Kentucky refuses to ratify it, upon what principle of right or law would we be justified in taking the slave property of the people of Kentucky. Would it be less than stealing?

This legislation has a tendency not only to create discord among the people of the North, but has a power so immense the mind cannot calculate its weight in giving strength and force to the rebellion. It fulfills all the prophecies of the South concerning the North. They have been bolstering up and maintaining their army by asserting that the people of the North intended to confiscate their homes and rob them of their slave property. The one has already been put in force by an unconstitutional enactment, and you now propose to do the other by the same process of illegality. These acts constitutes the propelling power which has filled southern armies. The fanatical legislation of this Congress has been of more value to the South, in giving them large armies, than all the conscriptions they have passed or bounties they have paid. Men, who were attached to the old Union, but placed under circumstances to be of little service to it, and who have been waiting with beating hearts to be again sheltered under the old flag, are now forced, not only into sympathy with the rebellion, but into hearty co-operation. They have no other resort. To remain idle now, is to lose all they have. In their opinion, to sustain the rebellion retains to them their property.

If slavery is to be abolished, allow it to be done according to the principles of common justice. Allow the people in each State the inalienable right through their legally constituted authorities to control their own domestic institutions in their own way. This was the doctrine held by statesmen whose passions and prejudices did not blind them to a correct idea of right.

President Harrison saw the disunion purposes of the Abolitionists and slavery agitators at an early day, and expressed the following opinion:

"I am, and have been, for many years, so much opposed to slavery, that I will never live in a slave State. But I believe the Constitution has given no power to the General Government to interfere in

this matter, and that to have slaves or no slaves, depends upon the people in each State alone. But besides the constitutional objection, I am persuaded that the obvious tendency of such interference on the part of the States which have no slaves with the property of their fellow citizens of the others, is to produce a state of discord and misery, that will, in the end, prove fatal to the Union. I believe that in no other State are such wild and dangerous sentiments entertained on this subject as in Ohio."

Sir, I do not deny the right of Congress to amend the Constitution of the United States for the benefit of the people, but I do deny the right of Congress to amend the Constitution to the destruction of the right of the people to hold property. It never was intended by the framers of the Constitution, nor by any of the great men who ruled this country, that the dominant party, blinded by prejudice, should alter or amend the Constitution, to the injury of the weaker section. If the North has the power to take from the South their property, it follows that if the South ever gets the power, she would have the same right to take our property, and the result would be that instead of the Constitution protecting the people it would be turned into a power to oppress them.

The Democratic party has been exerting its power to restrain legislation to its proper channel, and for this it is daily stated upon this floor and elsewhere that the Democrats are in sympathy with the rebellion. What a libel upon that great party! Its great principles, its pure devotion to the country, and its never-dying fealty to the doctrine of man's capacity for self-government, can receive these shocks of vituperation with as little effect as the mighty oak that has planted its roots deep into the mountain side, receives the peltings of the storm. Let history speak for the Democratic party. Under its control this nation grew from thirteen penniless colonies to thirty-four mighty States. Under its control the forests, where the red man roamed un molested, have been felled, and mighty cities have sprung up, with their spires piercing the clouds. Under its control the old-road wagon had scarcely pulverized the stones of the Macadamized pikes upon the mountains, until the iron horse flew with lightning speed through their bowels. It was under its control the sails of our vessels whitened every navigable stream in the world and the flag of our country protected American citizens in every clime. Under its control, when foreign nations were suffering for food, the old Ocean was made to groan beneath the weight of provisions sent to a starving people. Under its control science, agriculture, and the mechanical arts became so perfect and harmonious that the old world wondered in amazement at the scientific advancement of our people. Under its control the people of all climes and countries were invited to make this their home, where they might worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience and under their own "vine and fig tree." It was under the

control of this same Democratic party that vast and boundless territory was acquired. The great Northwest was moulded by the hand of the Democracy. That beautiful country, which was once a wild and waving prairie, is now dotted with habitations as the stars dot the Heavens above us, and her cattle are feeding upon a thousand hills. It was under Democratic control that "empire marched onward" until the flag of our country was placed upon the highest peaks of the Rocky Mountains,

"Whose vast walls
Have rima cled in clo s their snowy scalps,
And throned eternity in icy halls
Of cold submity."

Under Democratic rule the monster barriers of the Rocky Mountains proved no impediment to the onward march of American civilization and Constitutional government, and the adjoining valley was acquired, whose loveliness and beauty is described as rivalling the magnificence of the garden of Eden. The Democratic party not content with even all these splendid acquisitions took the "empire onward" and crossed the Sierra Nevada mountains, and planted the flag of the free upon the golden soil of California and gave us a "domain of more than imperial grandeur. Its valleys teem with unbounded fertility, and its mountains are filled with inexhaustible treasures of mineral wealth. The navigable rivers runs hundreds of miles into the interior, and the coast is indented with the most capacious harbors in the world. The climate is more healthful than any other on the globe, the vegetation is more vigorous, and the products more abundant; the face of the earth is more varied, and the sky bends over it with a lovelier blue. Everything in it is made upon a scale of magnificence which a man living in such a common-place region as ours can scarcely dream of,

"Which his eyes must see
To know how beautiful this world can be."

No political organization of any country or age can show so glorious a record, so free from blunders and crimes, and so rich in valuable achievements. The unexampled progress of the country in wealth and power, and its peaceful, prosperous, and happy condition before this war, were the result of the wise and patriotic policy of the Democratic party. Can the Democratic party in this, the hour of the country's desolation, forget its past history? The shout of one million five hundred thousand Democrats answer, No! The mission of the Democracy is to save our wrecked and divided country, and with the help of God, relying upon the justice of our cause, we will unite this distracted country in bonds so strong that future causes will never bring upon us a separation.

The man who, with this record before him, charges the Democratic party with disloyalty, I look upon as either a madman or a knave. When the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. Grinnell) uttered in debate the startling announcement that he "would rather say a

thousand times let the country be divided—“the South go their way, all slave, and the North all free, than see the country once more under Democratic rule.” I was not surprised. The history of the gentleman from Iowa is consistent with this treasonable language. He declared in a speech he made in Iowa that he would as soon see his daughter marry a negro as a Democrat. It well becomes a man of such refined education and exquisite taste to belch forth his bitterness against the Democratic party of the country.

Looking at the great progress and power of our people, the mind naturally asks the question, what has caused the afflicting and severe troubles that hang over us—what has caused this beautiful land to be drenched in blood, and brother meet brother in deadly conflict? I will not attempt to answer this question myself; but will give the warning voice of some of the great men who lived before us. The prophecy they then made is now being literally fulfilled, and we are reaping the bitter fruits of our disobedience to their advice.

General Washington, in his farewell address, thus admonishes the people:

“My countrymen, frown indignantly upon every attempt to alienate any portion of our country from the rest. BEWARE OF SECTIONAL ORGANIZATIONS! of arraying the North against the South or the South against the North. In the end it will prove fatal to our liberties.”

Gen. Jackson had the reputation of “seeing through a man at a glance.” He has left his sage counsels for us to ponder over. In his farewell address he says:

“What have you to gain by divisions and dissensions? Delude not yourselves with the hope that the breach once made would be afterwards easily repaired. If the Union is once severed, the separation will grow wider and wider, and the controversies which are now debated and settled in the halls of legislation, will be tried in the field of battle and determined by the sword. Neither should you deceive yourselves with the hope that the first line of separation would be the permanent one.”

Local interests would still be found there and unchastened ambition. If the recollection of common dangers, in which the people of the United States have stood side by side against the common foe, the prosperity and happiness they have enjoyed under the present Constitution—if all these recollections and proofs of common interests are not strong enough to bind us together, as one people, what tie will hold united the warring divisions of empire, when those bonds have been broken and the Union dissolved. The first line of separation would not last long—new fragments would be torn off—new leaders would spring up, and this glorious Republic would soon be broken into a multitude of petty States, armed for mutual aggressions—loaded with taxes to pay armies and leaders, seeking aid against each other from foreign powers—insulted and trampled upon by the nations of Europe, until harassed with conflicts and humbled and debased in spirit, they would be willing to submit to a domination of any military adventurer, and surrender their liberty for the sake of repose.”

Henry Clay, in a speech in Congress as

early as 1839, warned his countrymen against the fanaticism of the Abolitionists in the following words:

“Abolitionism shou'l no longer be regarded as an imaginary danger. The Abolitionists, let me suppose, succeed in their present aim of uniting the inhabitants of the free States as one man against the inhabitants of the slave States. Union upon one side will beget Union on the other, and this process of reciprocal consolidation will be attended with all the violent prejudices, embittered passions, and implacable animosities, which ever degraded or deformed human nature. * * * One section will stand in menacing and hostile array against the other. The collisions of opinion will be quickly followed by the clash of arms. I will not attempt to describe scenes which now happily lie concealed from our view. Abolitionists themselves would shrink back in horror at the contemplation of desolated fields, conflagrated cities, murdered inhabitants, and the overthrow of the fairest fabric of human government that ever rose to animate the hopes of civilized man.”

In addition to these warnings and prophecies might be added like opinions from all the great statesmen of the country. This advice has been disregarded, and a party was built up in the North whose aim was to destroy the institution of slavery, either out of hatred to the people of the South, or false ideas of humanity. They appealed to the passions of men, and labored to array the North against the South, and to alienate one section from the other. The friendly relations of the North and South were broken; strife begat strife. The unjustifiable intermeddling with the institutions of the South fed the bad passions of men until that section of our once happy country has taken up arms to destroy the fairest fabric of human government that ever rose to animate the hopes of civilized men.

Sir, I need not quote the treasonable utterances of the opponents of the Democratic party, nor their threats of violence to the South. I need not repeat how they exasperated the people of one section against another. How they attempted to murder and did murder citizens of the South in a wild attempt to abolish slavery. How many jack-leg itinerant preachers have gone to the South like the wolf in sheep's clothing to stir up servile insurrection, to incite the slave to murder his master and slay the first-born. Sir, this is the history of the fanatical party that was the inception and cause of the rebellion. While I do not justify the rebellion, while I pronounce those engaged in it guilty of treason, yea, worse than treason if there be such a crime, in truth and justice I must equally condemn that party which furnished them the excuse for the rebellion. During all the agitation preceding and attending secession, the Southern conspirators considered the Abolitionists their best friends. Governor Adams of South Carolina said of them:

“The Abolitionists are our best friends. Thank God for what they have already done; and for the

inestimable blessings they were about to confer, they were entitled to our warmest gratitude. Their assaults have been unceasing, but all for our good. They have furnished us a justification for dissolving our connection with them."

In three particulars, the Abolitionists were the best friends of the Southern conspirators. *First*, by furnishing them with the means to excite the Southern masses into rebellion. *Second*, by advocating the policy of "letting them go in peace" and thus aiding them to establish an "empire founded on slavery." *Third*, by pushing the government into an extreme policy of emancipation and confiscation, uniting the South, dividing the North, and in effect doubling the relative strength of the rebellion.

Slavery is denounced as the cause of the rebellion; I deny this, though it may be the occasion, as money is the occasion of larceny, robbery or burglary. If bad men did not covet their neighbors' money and lay felonious hands upon it and carry it away, such a crime as larceny would not be known to the law. If the unjustifiable and unlawful intermeddling with slavery had never occurred, there would have been no rebellion. The deadly conflict which is now convulsing the country from centre to circumference would not have occurred—no fields and beautiful farms devastated; no less of thousands of free and happy people; no grave-yards extending from the Potomac to the Mississippi; no people in mourning for lost friends who fell in battle. We lived four-score years in peace and prosperity, and the clash of arms in intestine war was not heard and never would have been, had the people been true to themselves and their country, by disowning and condemning the fanaticism of the Abolitionists.

This nation has been a nation of compromises. From its foundation and through its growth all its difficulties and its dissensions, have ended in mutual concessions. The spirit of our genius and the brilliancy of our destiny have always led us heretofore to compromise. When this nation was in the throes of dissolution, before secession had to any extent captivated the Southern heart we might have prevented this unnatural war. If the Crittenden amendments would have been adopted, the South would have remained in the Union, and to-day all would be peace. Fanaticism had triumphed at the polls and the President elect forgetting his country and remaining true only to his sectional platform and party, stood a mute observer to the great events which were passing. His party triumph was dearer to him than the interests of his country. His country was forgotten, and while on his way to assume the Presidential chair, he dealt in the slang phrase "nobody is hurt." Had he been possessed of the patriotism of a Clay or a Webster he would have done, as they did in 1850, forget his party devotion and kneel at the altar of his country and there pour the "oil upon the troubled waters," and thus allay the threat-

ening storm. This he could have done. He had power and influence over his own party, and at his suggestion his friends would have adopted a compromise which would have prevented secession and riveted the chains which bound this Union together in indissoluble bonds. Was it unbecoming or degrading to the party coming into power to have adopted the Crittenden compromise. Hear the reasonable and just provisions of that preserver of our peace:

ARTICLE I. In all the Territory of the United States now held, or hereafter acquired, situated north of latitude thirty-six degrees and thirty minutes, slavery or involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime, is prohibited while such territory shall remain under territorial government. In all the territory now held, or hereafter acquired, south of said line of latitude, slavery of the African race is hereby recognized as existing, and shall not be interfered with by Congress; but shall be protected as property by all the departments of the territorial government during its continuance; and when any territory north or south of said l^ene, within such boundaries as Congress may prescribe shall contain the population requisite for a member of Congress according to the then Federal ratio of representation of the people of the United States, it shall, if its form of government be republican, be admitted into the Union on an equal footing with the original States with or without slavery, as the Constitution of such new States may provide.

ARTICLE II. Congress shall have no power to abolish slavery in places under its exclusive jurisdiction, or within the limits of States that permit the holding of slaves.

ARTICLE III. Congress shall have no power to abolish slavery within the District of Columbia, so long as it exists in the adjoining States of Virginia and Maryland, or either, nor without the consent of the inhabitants, nor without just compensation first made to said owners of slaves as do not consent to such abolition. Nor shall Congress at any time prohibit officers of the Federal Government or members of Congress, whose duties require them to be in said District, from bringing with them their slaves, and holding them as such during the time their duties may require them to remain there, and afterward taking them from the District.

ARTICLE IV. Congress shall have no power to prohibit or hinder the transportation of slaves from one State to another, or to a territory in which slaves are by law permitted to be held, whether that transportation be by land, navigable rivers, or by sea.

ARTICLE V. That in addition to the provisions of the third paragraph of the second section of the fourth article of the Constitution of the United States, Congress shall have power to provide by law, and it shall be its duty so to provide, that the United States shall pay to the owner who shall apply for it the full value of his fugitive slave in all cases where the Marshal, or other officers, whose duty it was to arrest said fugitive, was prevented from so doing by violence or intimidation, or when after said arrest said fugitive was rescued by force, and the owner thereby prevented and obstructed in the pursuit of his remedy for the recovery of his fugitive slaves under the said clause of the Constitution and the laws made in pursuance thereof. And in such cases when the United States shall pay for such fugitive they shall have the right in their own name to sue the county in which such violence,

intimidation, or rescue was committed, and to recover from it, with interest and damages, the amount paid by them for said fugitive slave. And the said county, after it has paid said amount to the United States, may, for its indemnity, sue and recover from the wrong-doers or rescuers, by whom the owner was prevented from the recovery of his fugitive slave, in like manner as the owner himself might have sued and recovered.

ARTICLE VI. No future amendment of the Constitution shall affect the five preceding articles, nor the third paragraph of the second section of the first article of the Constitution, nor the third paragraph of second section of the fourth article of said Constitution, and no amendment shall be made to the Constitution which will authorize or give to Congress any power to abolish or interfere with slavery in any of the States by whose laws it is or may be allowed or permitted.

If these amendments, Mr. Speaker, would have satisfied the South and saved the Union, the people who bear the burden of the war, who pay heavy taxes, and who give their sons to the army, will ask what party is responsible for their defeat? I will answer by quoting from the votes and proceedings in the Senate of the United States where this compromise originated. On the 3d of March, 1861, the Crittenden amendments were voted upon, and the following is the vote:

YEAS—Biard, Bigler, Johnson, Kennedy, Polk, Pugh, Bright, Crittenden, Douglas, Gwin, Hunter, Lane, Latham, Mason, Nicholson, Rice, Sebastian, Thomson, Wigfall.—19.

NAYS—Anthony, Bingham, Chandler, Clark, Dixon, Doolittle, Durkee, Fessenden, Foote, Foster, Grimes, Harlan, King, Morrill, Sumner, Ten Eyck, Trumbull, Wade, Wilkinson, and Wilson.—20.

Of the nineteen who voted *yea*, seventeen were Democrats and two Southern Americans. The twenty who voted *nay*, were all Republicans. If the Republicans had voted *yea*, the country would have been saved, and no war with all its desolating effects would have been inaugurated. But party predominated.

It has often been asserted by the opposition that the Crittenden amendments would not have saved the country from war. I will not rest the solution of this question upon my own opinion. I appeal to the proceedings in the Senate for a correct estimate of their value. Senator Pugh, of Ohio, has put on record the following testimony as to what could have been done under a proper desire to save the Union:

"The Crittenden proposition has been endorsed by the almost unanimous vote of the Legislature of Kentucky. It has been endorsed by the Legislature of the noble old commonwealth of Virginia. It has been petitioned for by a larger number of electors of the United States than any proposition that was ever before Congress. I believe in my heart to day that it would carry an overwhelming majority of the people of my State; aye, Sir, and of nearly every State in the Union. Before the Senators from the State of Mississippi left this Chamber I heard one of them, who assumes at least to be President of the Southern Confederacy, propose to accept it and maintain the Union if that proposition, could receive the vote it ought to

receive from the other side of the Chamber. Therefore, all of your propositions, of all your amendments, knowing as I do, and knowing that the historian will write it down, at any time before the first of January, a two-thirds vote for the Crittenden resolution, in this Chamber would have saved every State in the Union but South Carolina. Georgia would be here by her representatives and Louisiana, those two great States which at least would have broken the whole column of secession."—page 1480, *Globe*.⁴

To show that yielding would have saved us we quote the lamented Douglas at an early period:

"The Senator [Mr. PUGH] has said that if the Crittenden proposition could have passed early in the session, it would have saved all the States except South Carolina. I firmly believe it would. While the Crittenden proposition was not in accordance with my cherished views, I avowed my readiness to accept it, in order to save the Union if we could unite upon it. I can confirm the Senator's declaration, that Senator Davis himself, when on that committee of thirteen, was ready at all times, to compromise on the Crittenden proposition. I will go farther and say that Mr. Toombs was also,—page 1481, *Globe*.

Judge Douglas said in a speech in the Senate, January 3, 1861:

"I address the inquiry to the Republicans alone, for the reason that, in the Committee of Thirteen a few days ago, every member of the South, including those from the cotton States, [Messrs. TOOMBS and DAVIS,] expressed their readiness to accept the proposition of my venerable friend from Kentucky [Mr. CRITTENDEN] as a final settlement of the controversy, if tendered and sustained by Republican members. Hence the sole responsibility of our disagreement. The only difficulty in the way of amicable adjustment is with the Republican party."

Judge Douglas has so often been quoted on this floor as authority, I scarcely think any one will deny what he said. Then, sir, the present Administration and its friends are responsible for the non-settlement of our difficulties, and are equally chargeable with the secessionists for every drop of blood which has been shed. The very acts of the opposition prove they did not desire to have peace and tranquility reign, but preferred bloodshed at the risk of national ruin and bankruptcy. Hear the present Secretary of the Treasury:

"WASHINGTON, Feb. 9, 1861.

"DEAR SIR:—Thanks for your note and explanation of that vote. It may be useful. There is a greater disposition to compromise than I like to see. But I hope the best. Half a dozen of the Border State gentlemen have been in our room tonight; Etheridge and Stokes, of Tennessee, Adams and Bristow, of Kentucky, Gilmer, of North Carolina, and others. I really sympathize with them, but see no reason why we should sacrifice permanently a large power to help them, for the purpose of giving temporarily a little one.

"Yours, cordially,

S. P. CHASE."

There is a greater disposition to compromise than I like to see, says Mr. Chase. Certain Southern gentlemen had been in his room asking for compromise. He really sym-

pathized with them, but his party fealty held him against a settlement.

We hear it frequently asserted that the responsibility of not quelling the rebellion in its infancy rests with President Buchanan. If there ever was a clear and satisfactory defence for any public man in times of great national danger, that defence undoubtedly belongs to Mr. Buchanan. That he exercised rare qualities of statesmanship and a most exalted patriotism is a proposition which I regard as beyond all controversy. It is true that he was of all men in the country the most anxious that our difficulties should be settled without a resort to arms—

"For the field of the dead rushed red on his sight."

In the Gulf States the excitement ran high. Southern men, who, as Mr. Douglas testifies, were willing and anxious for a settlement, entreated him to exert his influence with the Northern men to meet them on equal grounds. His days were spent in unavailing attempts to have them appreciate the danger. They listened not to his admonitions, and when he brought the subject to their attention by his message of January 8, 1861, and urged upon them the necessity of either compromising the difficulties or giving him power to raise the requisite forces, they scorned his counsel and refused him the power. Congress, contented itself with preparing and listening to angry speeches, still more exciting the public mind. The Peace Convention was broken up by Republicans. Yet, through all these dark days Mr. Buchanan safely carried this Government and handed it over in full vigor to Mr. Lincoln. That he should have done so well, standing as he did between two parties bent on the destruction of the country, will be the great wonder of our children. It is a most fitting commentary upon the policy of Mr. Buchanan's administration that Mr. Lincoln, for six long weeks after his inauguration, followed precisely in the footsteps of his predecessor. This fact speaks more for the wisdom of Mr. Buchanan's policy than all the praise of his most ardent friends.

I repeat it, Mr. Speaker, and history will sustain me in the declaration, that the same breath which casts calumny upon Mr. Buchanan for an alleged inefficiency must cover with unspeakable shame the man who, with that experience before him, chose to walk in the same path. Mr. Lincoln well knew that up to the day that Fort Sumpter was fired upon, the prospect for a settlement had not faded away. The three great States of Virginia, Tennessee and North Carolina still stood fast for the Union, and he himself had but a short time before expressed the opinion that the Union sentiment predominated in every Southern State, excepts perhaps South Carolina. Mr. Buchanan acted upon the belief that the American people could never be guilty of such gross folly as to lash them selves to pieces in a civil war. Had Fort Sumter been fired upon during his term of

office, force would have been met by force. General Dix in a speech made not long since bears this testimony to Mr. Buchanan's resolution; and he, it will be remembered, was a member of the Cabinet and ought to know what he affirms.

War is upon us—what shall we do? Shall we resign ourselves to the fate of a dismembered Republic, or will we spring up giant-like to new hope of a speedy peace and restoration of the Union. Under this administration we never can have it. I take it, sir, it is not the intention of the opposition to have peace until every negro is free. If this was not their object, the Administration in power would have faithfully adhered to the resolution adopted by Congress with unparalleled unanimity on the 22d of July, 1861, "that this war is not waged on their part in any spirit of oppression, for any purpose of conquest or subjugation, or purpose of overthrowing or interfering with the rights or established institutions of the States, but to defend and maintain the *supremacy of the Constitution, and to preserve the Union with all the dignity, equality, and rights of the several States unimpaired.*" They will free the slaves of the South, and enslave their own children in the most galling yoke known to mankind—that of enormous taxation to pay an immense public debt.

I charge it upon the opposition—

That they are not in favor of a restoration of this Union; that in the event of the election of a Democratic President in November next, they will be in favor of the recognition of the Southern Confederacy.

That the war has been made a pretext and apology for the usurpation, by the President, of powers unwarranted by the Federal Constitution and totally irreconcilable with the letter and spirit of our institutions.

That the war has been conducted to build up a party at the expense of blood and treasure and time, and at the hazard of permanent separation of the States.

That the conduct of the war has been characterized by corruptions unprecedented in the history of any people, for which the President has in many instances declared himself responsible.

That the present Administration has committed itself to doctrines which elevates the military above the civil power, affect the purity of the ballot-box, and endanger the personal liberty of the citizen.

That the policy now declared is fatal, not merely to all ideas of a legal reunion of the States, but foreshadows future bankruptcy, constant agitation, the establishment of a large standing army, and in a time not remote, a military centralization such as to day exists in France. If we are prepared for all this; if we close our eyes and shut our mouths, and

do not raise our voices against the infringement that is now being made upon our rights; and we permit the present Administration to remain in power, we should bow our necks to the yoke of tyranny without a murmur. But, if we intend to secure to ourselves the imperishable boon to speak, to act as a free people, and to enjoy liberty and preserve our rights, we must retrace our steps to a strict observance of the laws and the Constitution. The question is with the people to decide. "Where there is a will, there is a way." No bristling bayonets, no threats or executive influence, can tame the will of a people who love liberty. Their fires will be kindled upon every mountain side, until the vallies are lurid with the burning incense upon the altar

of liberty, and their shouts will be heard above the din of battle:

"To arms, my friends! And let no sword be sheathed
Until our land from cliff to lake is free!
Free as our torrents are, that leap our rocks,
Or as our peaks, that wear their caps of snow
In the very presence of the regal sun!
A country's never lost that hath one man
To wrestle with the tyrant who'd enslave her!"

The liberty of speech, the freedom of the ballot-box, and the inalienable rights of the citizen are worth preserving. If defending them on this floor makes this side of the House, in the opinion of gentlemen on the other side, sympathisers with the rebellion, we know we do our duty, and that unborn generations will rise to bless the memory of the men who have preserved for them the rights and privileges of their fathers.

